

Written Testimony on HJ 30

I am submitting this in support of what HJ 30. All the information requested is fully available at the Department of Military Affairs and Montana Veterans Affairs. They have full time staff in DMA with all the answers about state and federal benefits for veterans and pay status for guardsmen. The Guard pay system can be complicated because of way they are trained and utilized. Reserve pay is somewhat less complicated and the information is readily available.

The question is how this information can best be used to create solutions for the problems veterans face. Veterans Service Organizations and Montana Military Affairs Division would be good sources. I would like to work toward the goal of presenting proposals based on facts and needs.

One of the reasons I'm so concerned is that the numbers servicemen and women from Viet Nam and this series of conflicts starting in 1991 are similar. In some ways it's worse because today's volunteers are doing multiple deployments. We're talking 3 million people, and we are not ready for the potential problems. Estimates run as high as 60% for an occurrence of PTSD over an extended time. Mental health care systems, employment, housing, courts, and even prisons, along with other services, provide opportunities to help and often are provided at the state level

I am somewhat gratified by what I saw in this session. There are a number of individual bills which really can make a difference. I will single one out to make the point. Senator Buttrey sponsored a bill to put the word "VETERAN" on the Montana Drivers License. It actually makes the state money in the out years because of a reduced demand for State ID cards. It costs very little to implement. It provides veterans of all ages a means to identify themselves and Senator Buttrey states there are 900 businesses in Montana who give Veterans discounts. More importantly perhaps, every time a young (or old) veteran pulls out his or her driver's license, they will be reminded of their heritage of belonging to something they can look back on with pride.

By gathering the information described prior to the next session, we will have made a step forward toward developing legislation to address specific issues facing Veterans, Guardsmen and Reservists

Respectfully,

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